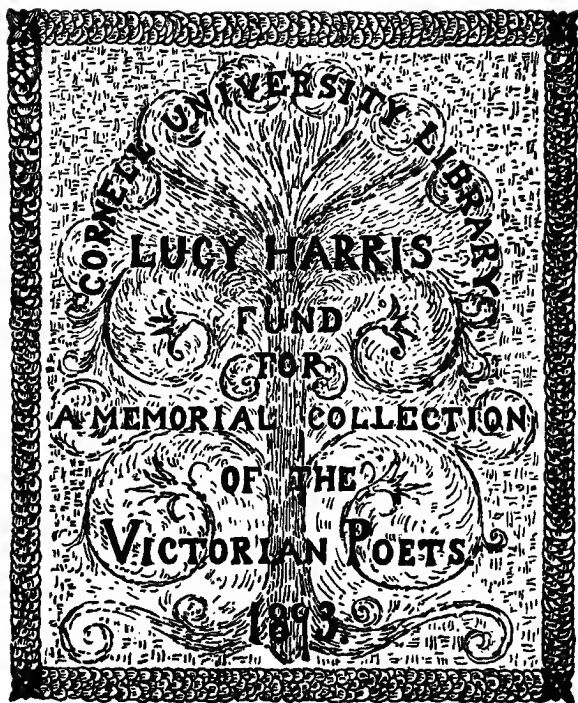


BOADICEA

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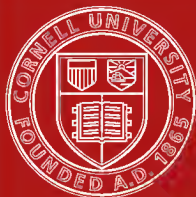
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BOADICEA

BOADICEA

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

POEMS FOR RECITATION, ETC.

BY

MRS. AYLMER GOWING

(*EMILIA AYLMER* ⁼⁼*BLAKE*)

AUTHOR OF "BALLADS OF THE TOWER," "SITA AND OTHER
POEMS FOR RECITATION," "GODS OF GOLD," "MERELY
PLAYERS," "A TOUCH OF THE SUN," ETC.

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO. L^{TD}.

PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1899

CHISWICK PRESS:—CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

TO MY OLD FRIEND,
SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.
AND
TAMA KUROKAWA, HIS WIFE.

EMILIA AYLMER GOWING.

“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart : so doth the sweetness of
a friend by hearty counsel.”—PROVERBS, xxvii. 9.

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BOADICEA.

CHARACTERS.

ROMANS :

PAULINUS SÜETONIUS, *Governor of Britain.*

JULIUS AGRIPPA, *a tribune.*

LUCIUS CORNELIUS, *a centurion.*

ADONIS, *a freedman of Julius Agrippa.*

PARIS, *a gymnast.*

BRITONS :

MADOC, *Arch-druid of Britain.*

CARIOVALDA, *a bard.*

VORTIGERN, *a warrior.*

BOADICEA (*widow of Prasutagus*), *Queen of the Iceni*

GUENEBA, } *her daughters.*

ENA,

Romans, Britons, Soldiers, Priests, Priestesses, Bards,
Attendants, etc., etc.

Scene : Britain in A.D. 62.

BOADICEA.

BOADICEA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Royal residence of BOADICEA.*

Throne at back, c.

Enter CARIOVALDA and VORTIGERN.

Car. Well, Vortigern, fresh from the Roman colony?

Vor. Yes; to-day beneath Queen Boadicea's roof; three days ago in London. Hard riding, that!

Car. And what's the news in London? The British Rome!

Vor. Our little Island, they say, shall be esteemed the brightest gem the Master of the world has set in his Imperial diadem.

Car. We Britons love no masters.

Vor. True; we choose rather to be our own lords, for good or evil, as the gods will.

Car. Do you know, this day Queen Boadicea receives the envoy of the Roman Governor?

Vor. How? And where?

Car. Here; in this, her ancestral hall; upon the throne.
'Twill be a scene in the world's history; we shall see it pass
before our eyes.

Vor. Cariovalda, you, a bard, are a man of peace. Let
love, not hate, be the issue of this day. Our Queen has two
fair daughters

Car. And what of them?

Vor. One of them a Roman has looked upon with eyes of
love.

Car. What, the proud Guenebra?

Vor. I speak not of the haughty elder-born;
The young and gentle Ena is beloved
By a centurion of the Roman host,
Lucius Cornelius.

Car. Fair may this befall,
And tune our discords to sweet notes of joy!
Yet fear I lest this harmony of hearts
Grate harshly on the Royal ear; our Queen
Abhors the stranger.

Vor. You are privileged
To speak in secret with the great and fair.
You, tell the Lady Ena that to-day,

An hour ere sunset, by the blasted oak
That stands alone amidst the woodland glade,
Three bowshots from the highway, there and then,
Cornelius waits for her.

Car. I mark the tryst.

But what is this Cornelius?

Vor. Such as man

Should fear and woman trust. Amongst her sons
Not Rome, nor yet our Albion, could choose out
His parallel in honour ; no, not one !

Car. Then shall the Lady Ena meet him there.
Here comes the Roman envoy with the Queen.
See, Madoc, the Arch-druid !

Enter QUEEN BOADICEA attended ; GUENEBRA and ENA, her
daughters ; MADOC, the Arch-druid ; ADONIS, the Roman
envoy. Roman soldiers, Britons, etc. BOADICEA sits
upon the throne.

Boad. Sit you there,
My daughters ; you have act and part with me
In this great business.

[*They sit beneath her on the steps of the throne.*

[*To ADONIS.*] Sir, you are from Rome,

Whom we are bound to hear, if not in hate,
Still less in dread. Speak, is it peace between us?

Adon. Peace and protection, and release from cares
Whose burden wrongs your sex, I bring you, Queen,
With greeting from the Roman Governor,
Paulinus Suetonius.

Boad. Bear him back
His greeting. True it is, a widow, lorn,
Most sorrowful of women that do live,
I hide away my grief within my heart,
And in the public cares forget my own ;
Proved not unequal to the lofty task
Country and children have imposed on me.
You know, Prasutagus my husband's will
Did, wisely or unwisely, name co-heir
Your Roman Cæsar with my daughters here.
The half his kingdom and his wealth are yours ;
The rest we hold, our right.

Adon. Your wealth we grant
To each an equal part ; but, for the kingdom,
Know you the lords of Rome will share no rule,
However great, with women. Since the gods
Gave you no son, this land of the Iceni

Passes to us, your masters.

Boad. Roman, know
We will not ape your customs : Britain's sons
Obey the sceptre swayed by woman's hand ;
Our right gives strength to bear our dignities.

Adon. We will not have it so ; 'twere best give up
What we have power to take.

Madoc. Are these the men
Who rule the world with boastings ? These, forsooth,
Spare such as yield and trample down the proud !
Ay, crush the widow and the fatherless.
But we have men in Britain ! lives there one
Who bears a spark of valour in his breast
That will not take their part ? Our manhood stands
Ready to help the weak against the strong.

Adon. What long-robed railer preaches war with us ?
I'll take my answer from the Queen alone.

Boad. Stay, noble Madoc, we will speak them fair.
Stranger, would you despoil us, we have not
Wherewith to tempt your greed : can Roman Cæsar,
Lord of a thousand marble palaces,
Blazoned with gold and jewels, envy us
Our forest roof, shut out in this cold Isle

And border of the world? But that we have
We dearly prize, our freedom. Push us not
To desperate defence.

Adon. 'Tis Rome's proud boast
To conquer and subdue a haughty race
Subject to her alone. Earth's utmost verge
Measures the limit of her eagles' flight,
Unscathed by mortal weapons. Rich you are
In sturdy manhood to provoke our souls,
And beauty to allure. What wealth I note
Of love in your fair daughters, fairer self,
Beautiful Queen!

Boad. Away with mockery!
My love and beauty, sacred to the dead,
Plight with no second an adulterous vow;
My daughters, too, are home-bred, and may not
Match with the alien.

Adon. True; our nuptial rites
Might be profaned—but there are shorter ways
Than solemn marriage to a Roman's will.

Boad. What do you mean?

Madoc. Who art thou? Answer us,
Foul scoffer, with the language of a slave

Beneath the roof of kings.

Adon. What matter who ?

The freedman of a Roman citizen,

Adonis, Nero's friend—your master here.

Boad. How, slave, does Rome insult us ?

Madoc. I will make

Him fitting answer. Queen, you are betrayed !

Does Suetonius send his bondmen hither

Ambassadors to Britain ? We appeal

To Cæsar ; be his messenger to us

A warrior of renown, and we will treat

As princes with your prince.

Adon. I come not here

To thrust and parry with a meddling priest,

But charged with Cæsar's will, and by his power

Claim what you cannot choose but yield, or else

The worse event for you.

Madoc. Yield ! Come ye then

And take what we refuse ! But we are men

Sprung from our British earth : six feet of that,

Heavy with curses of our country's gods,

We'll yield each Roman foe, to hold for ever !

Boad. And I, a woman, widowed, husbandless,

Call down the vengeance of the eternal Judge
Upon the invader of my desolate hearth ;
Ay, upon every Roman of ye all !

Ena. Hold, mother, mercy ! Not on all, not all !

Boad. How say'st thou, Ena ? Girl, dost thou not hate
Thine and thy nation's foes ?

Ena. Not all alike. . . .

Not every Roman is our enemy :
And if they were—their women weep for them
As we for those we love. Not from our lips
Should fall the words of cursing.

Car. She speaks well.

Be patient, Royal Queen, and we may find
A better way to end these fierce debates
Than the red field of blood.

Boad. I'll hear no more
Of coward counsels ! Take thy answer, slave,
And bid thy master in the name of me,
The Britons' Queen, defiance ! Hand to hand
We'll pay him tribute freely, blood for blood !
Hence from our sight !

Adon. Proud Queen, we'll meet again !

[*General confusion.* Scene closes in.

SCENE 2.—*A Forest.*

Enter JULIUS AGRIPPA and Soldiers, meeting LUCIUS

CORNELIUS and Soldiers. *A halt.*

Agri. Ho, Centurion! What duty are you bound upon?

How,

Lucius Cornelius, my good friend! I'm right glad to see you!

Corn. My duty, Agrippa, keeps me in this neighbourhood, waiting the result of our General's mission to the British Queen.

Agri. We shall fight for 't; that's pretty sure.

Corn. I fear so, Tribune.

Agri. Fear so! A centurion fear to fight barbarians! Oh, ho! My Cornelius is in love with some fresh-coloured girl of Britain. Come, tell us what she is? A savage princess, eh?

Corn. A princess—yes.

Agri. What, hast thou looked upon the proud Guenebra?

Corn. Admiringly, but not with love; her sister, the gentle Ena, has my heart. Could there be peace between our nations, I would dare to offer her a Roman's hand.

Agri. Ha, ha, ha! You mean marriage! Not I! But if ever mortal knew what 'tis to desire royal beauty, I am the man, Julius Agrippa! The conqueror of a hundred Roman dames. But I never dreamed of folly like thine! Wed a

barbarian, oh, Juno! Æneas never did the like for Dido, nor Mark Antony for Cleopatra, and these were royal queens.

Corn. But Ena is a pure maiden of Britain ; her truth and love are more than kingdoms to her dower. Worthier is she than any frail queen to hold a Roman to his faith.

Agri. Has faith to do with fancy? I have heard
These blue-eyed damsels of the western isles
Do catch men with a look ; but in my life
I never heard that they could keep them long.
Go we together?

Corn. No ; I'll ask your leave
For two hours' absence, Tribune. I would be,
An hour ere sunset, by the blasted oak,
To meet fair Ena.

Agri. Fair befall the tryst !
Go along, merry tippler ! I do love
To catch your shamefaced wisdom tripping so !
But leave your men with me. We'll meet to-night.

[*Exit* LUCIUS CORNELIUS.]

Agri. There goes a lover ! Happily despatched, and much to the profit of my pleasures, for here comes my Mercury, my Cupid's wing, my good creature, Adonis.

Enter ADONIS.

Well, my liberty man, my uncaged bird, what news? What answer from the British Queen to our General's demands? Aught to the purpose, eh?

Adon. One word will give you my message, Tribune.

Agri. And that word is

Adon. War.

Agri. So I expected, and took heed for all.
The scornful lustre of Guenebra's eyes
Must shine upon our feast to-night ; no need
For ceremony now ; such is my will.

Adon. Not to be questioned, Tribune, by a man
Born in your house, a slave. How would you, sir,
I go to work? How seize the royal maid?

Agri. Listen ; this evening by the blasted oak
Young Ena and her Roman lover meet ;
And surely will Guenebra not far off
O'erlook their tryst ; for I have oft observed
The sisters grow together, though unlike,
As buds the violet 'neath the lily's sheen ;
And wending homeward through the thickening night,
We'll pluck them for the garland of our cup.
Choose the fit men, and see that it be done.

Adon. Who is the Roman lover?

Agri. Ha! I had
Forgotten him—Cornelius. Why the fool
Purposes marriage.

Adon. This comes of his sect,
A Galilean.

Agri. Where could he have learned
That Jewish superstition?

Adon. Know you not
His father in Judea held command?

Agri. Was that so, truly? Let the son beware
He cross not my fixed purpose. Is 't not known
Cæsar abhors all Christians? I am glad
This man is one. 'Tis time we were astir.
Ho! for the blasted oak. We race for joy
'Gainst sallow-visaged wisdom. Venus wins! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE 3.—*The blasted oak.* LUCIUS CORNELIUS, ENA.
GUENEBRA *at back, watching.*

Ena. Am I not come to thee? Doth not my life
Hang on thy lip, and feed upon thine eye?
Even though my mother's curse should cut me off.

Say, can we part ?

Corn. I fear me that we must ;
Unless, forsaking all, thou cling to me.
I stand upon a rock, whilst thou beneath,
Cast upwards by the mighty wave of war,
One moment on my breast, the next, drawn down
Into the deep sea's heart, mayst rise no more
From shipwreck of thy people.

Ena. Oh, my country !
My mother—sister—must I lose them all ?
And wilt thou lend thy hand to aid such things ?

Corn. I am a soldier in the grip of Rome,
Sworn to obey ; and Rome and all her power,
A feather-weight upon the balance, held
By Him Who gave Rome empire ; on the wings
Of Roman eagles shall His name go forth
And win the world to Him. Great is the end
Foreknown of heaven to Britain, though the woe
Be sharp in passing.

Ena. Fearful are thy words !
Not like thyself. Yet wert thou changed, unkind,
Thou couldst not change my love, all thine for ever.
A maid of Britain brings her chosen lord

A heart as single as the heavenly light ;
To take of him, as love-gifts, sword and shield,
Javelin and war-horse ; for at home, abroad,
She bears her part with him in life and death,
And when he dies, his grave is her true heart.
So did my mother love, and 'tis my fate
So to love thee.

Corn. Oh, take away from me
The thought of what thou art, what golden band
Of Royalty encircles that sweet brow ;
Are we not heart in heart, for ever one ?
Then come away with me !

Ena. How shall I leave
My mother in her sorrow ? Half my heart
Bleeds with keen anguish cleft for her sake . . . half
Flies on strong wings of love toward thee, its lord.
If thou dost love me, end this strife.

Corn. I will !
Once more I shall endeavour, plead for peace
'Twixt Roman and Briton : wherefore are we foes ?
Both bred of Trojan fathers, suckled both
With freedom as with mother's milk ; both born
To lead the world's great battles ; why should we

Hate one another, brothers of one blood ?

Ena. The heavens take pity on us !

Corn. My beloved,

Plight me thy troth, and I, a Christian man,
Sworn to the Cross that shall subdue the world,
Through Love that rules in heaven, for love's sake
Will think thy Britain Eden !

Ena. Take the heart

I could not keep, the life I can but lose,
Who only live in thee. . . . Oh, me ! how strange
The words upon my lip without my will !
My mother, country, and my country's gods,
All my past days eclipsed, amid the dark
Trembling, and overborne with fear, I come . . .
Keep me, for I am thine !

Corn. As mine own soul !

Guen. [*Advancing.*] Sister, what dost thou ? Come away,
depart.

Look, where the sun has set. Ah, time is swift,
And ye are happy ! Bid the Roman go.

Corn. Take back the maiden to her mother's breast,
And trust a Roman's vow ; if all else fail,
The eagle that I guard shall shelter her,

Thee, and her mother. Ere a single hair
Of this fair head shall suffer harm, my heart
Shall pour its last drop on your British earth.
Farewell, Guenebra. . . . Dearest love, one kiss !
Heaven guard thee safe until we meet again !

[*Exit CORNELIUS.*

Guen. Can there be honour in a Roman's love ?
Truth in a Roman's vows ? Would heaven I knew !

Ena. What say'st thou, sister ?

Guen. I, too, love . . . but thou
Art happier than I.

Ena. If thou dost love
Against the bent of custom, kindred, birth,
Are we not sisters ? Thee I deemed by pride
Safe from the thrill of passion, and the pain.
Unlock thy heart to me ; I listen.

Guen. Sister,
The eye of man had never bent my pride ;
For glory, not for love, my soul athirst
Dreamed of its mate, a conqueror of men,
An equal of the gods. A Roman's crest
Darkened my mother's threshold ; dost remember
Julius Agrippa ? Like a god of war,

Speaking us gently, though upon his brow
Sat awe and stern command? I feared him not . . .
When men were faint with fear . . . but when his eye
Floated in light of love on me, I sank
Self-conscious, as a foolish, chidden child.

Ena. My darling sister !

Guen. Speak of it no more.

Hence, let us homewards.

Ena. Look, oh look ! A light
Flashes beneath the moon . . . A Roman armed !

Guen. It is himself !

Enter JULIUS AGRIPPA.

Agri. Guenebra, I am here.
Why dost thou start so wildly ?

Guen. Is't for me
Thy steps bend hither ? If it be so, then,
I pray thee, let me go.

Agri. Not till this world
Break from the grasp of Rome ! My beautiful,
Thou'rt mine ! I love thee ! [*Seizes her arm.*]

Guen. What, against my will ?

Enter ADONIS with Roman soldiers.

Agri. Fairest, those eyes betray thy lips ; I know
Thou dost not hate me ; though thy tongue forbid,
Thy charms, thy tears compel with stronger spells
Thy lover to thy feet. Come, come with me !

Ena. Sister, we are surrounded by armed men,
Set upon women ! . . . As you are a man,
Forbear rough violence. Know, sir, that I,
Pledged to a Roman, claim a Roman's right
To honour and respect, as woman's due.

Agri. Pledged to a Roman ! Then we'll woo you both
In Sabine fashion. Bear away these brides !

Ena. [*Struggling with the Soldiers.*] Sister . . . oh, save me !

Guen. Stand you back . . . the hare
Resists the hounds in vain. We follow him,
Your master. Hear me, Roman, it is true
That I have loved thee ; in thy power I am,
To pay my love with bondage, chains or death ;
Do as thou wilt with me, but on this maid
Beware no Roman set profaning eye,
Lest all the land arise, and blood for shame
The alien shall repay . . . for honour, lives !

Come, sister : . . . Thus enforced, we follow thee.

[*Exeunt. March. Military music.*]

Enter VORTIGERN followed by CARIOVALDA.

Car. This is the place. There, fire fell down from heaven :
The thunder-rifted oak puts forth its leaves,
Green budding round the ruin at its core,
Like hope fresh springing from a broken heart.
Here was the place of tryst. . . . See, what is that ?

[*Picks up a golden crown.*]

A golden circlet from the Princess' hair !
I am afraid some dark and cruel snare
Has caught our doves lone wandering from their home.
Oh, woe ! 'Twas I who limed the springe, beguiled
By Roman craft.

Vor. Hist ! Listen ! I can hear
The tramp of Roman soldiers shake the ground ;
Yonder they march away.

Car. Here comes the Queen
In desperate search. . . . What will she say to me ?

Enter BOADICEA attended.

Boad. What tidings of my daughters ?

Car. [*Showing the circlet.*] Only this.

Boad. Lost, lost, betrayed ! Why didst thou let them go ?
Speak not to me ! the gods pluck out thy tongue
That never whispered me a word in time.
Know'st not I am a mother ? The she-wolf,
Robbed of her young, will turn and rend her kind ;
Shall I be patient rather ? I could bear
With loss of all but children ; answer not.
Give me my daughters !

Car. Yet be comforted ;
They live. . . .

Boad. Live ! Rather would I see them dead,
Here on the ground ; yes, I that bore them, I,
Than yield them living to the Roman's power !
Up to the rescue ! To the ends of earth
Follow me, Britons, I will find them out,
My children ; dead or living, bring them back.
Ho ! to the rescue, to the rescue, all !

[*Britons shout. General movement.*]

TABLEAU. END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A British Encampment.* MADOC, CARIOVALDA,
VORTIGERN, and an assembly of Britons.

Madoc. Here shall we meet, unfettered as the winds
Soughing amidst the pine-tops, where the storm
Brews his own keen wrath-blast. From the vault of heaven
Do everlasting eyes look down on us,
Poor passion-shaken dust ! . . . Ye men of Britain,
Hear me, the gods' arch-priest, whose oracles
Speak in the brave of soul ! Up, help your Queen !

[*Shouts, "We will ! we will !" and clashing of arms
against shields.*

Madoc. Peace ! Hush the clamour of your shields and
spears ;
Listen to me. Your Queen is sunk in silence ;
But hear the cause. Centurions fill her halls,
And Roman soldiers wreak their butcheries
Among her people. Her, our Royal Queen,
They bound and scourged . . . ay, like the vilest slave !
What think ye, men of Britain, of this shame ? [*Murmurs.*

Yet worse have I to tell : the Queen hath 'scaped
Bleeding, yet stainless from the Roman's grasp ;
Not so her daughters ; rise and rescue them !

Vor. Oh, Madoc, I would answer thee a word,
For the two maidens' sake ; our hostages
To Rome . . . too dear for danger. Ransom them
By terms of peace.

Madoc. War, war with perjured Rome !
No tribute shall she wring but drops of blood
From hearts that know the taste of liberty !

Vor. Yet in Ostorius' time the land had rest . . .

Madoc. Ostorius, true ; he was a noble foe ;
We paid him tribute when Caractacus,
Britain's great champion, made the Roman proud
By his captivity. We taught our masters
How to exact of us, dumb sheep, whose fleece
Being yielded could not ransom skin or flesh ;
Ay, with the harvest was the seed consumed
By all-devouring usury ; gold we lacked,
Till bought of Rome to render back to Rome,
The cost, most precious lives ; to see our sons,
The pith and marrow of our manhood, nursed
By British mothers, sold to slavery,

And mingled with the legions' ranks, to fall
In alien battles. No, yield all, or none.

Vor. Who leads us, then, to war?

Madoc. The Queen !

Vor. The Queen !

Why comes she not amongst us?

Madoc. Her great grief

Lies heavy on her. Would she were aroused
From hopeless apathy.

Car. Look there, she comes,
The shadow of her greatness !

Enter BOADICEA. Shouts, "Hail, our Queen !"

Madoc. Oh, Boadicea, Warrior-Queen, arise !
The men of Britain call on thee, their chief,
To lead their hosts in arms 'gainst perjured Rome.

Boad. Is't war with Rome? Give men the work of men ;
I am a woman . . . shamed.

Madoc. We know thy soul
Heroic, strong beyond the strength of man ;
Three hundred thousand wait upon thy word ;
Think of thy wrongs and speak ; the immortal gods
Taste not a joy to match with thy revenge !

Boad. No ; I can taste of only misery,
Burning desire of death. But give me pain,
Anguish of body to assuage the fire
Devouring round my heart ! Thou dust of earth,
Cover my face, that eyes of men and gods
See not my shame. Yield, clay, and hide my head,
Here where I cast me down to rise no more !

[*Sinks on the ground.*]

Vor. Nay, Queen, remember yet, our last, sole hope
Is bound in thee.

Boad. Thou Roman slave, away !
Hence, miserable scoffer ! Thou a man ?
A Briton ? . . . Lo, thy mien, thy very speech
Brands thee degenerate ; sure thy dam played false
With some lewd fox of Rome . . . Thou hast betrayed
My virgin daughters to the like . . . Begone !

Car. Go, go ! she cannot bear thee in her sight !
Seek out the maidens in the Roman camp ;
Bring news of them . . . or else return no more.

[*Exit VORTIGERN.*]

Madoc. At the great bidding of the gods I speak :—
Arise, O Queen, look up ; though deep thy grief,
One woman's sorrow must not crush this land.

Rise from the earth.

Boad. No ; what have I to do
Beneath the sun, but lay me down and die ?
The Roman rods have bruised my spirit within,
Rome on my heart hath rolled a rock of stone :
Why should I taste the bitterness of life ?
Death's sting is past and done.

Madoc. Yet life has woes
Beyond thine own ; I, even I, will speak,
Whom the high gods have made their minister
To suffer for my people ! I, the last
Of slaughtered thousands. Know'st thou not, even now,
Paulinus hath a Roman shambles set
In Mona's sacred isle ? The blood of priests
And virgin priestesses hath quenched the fires
Kindled for sacrifice. I am alone,
My wife, my children slain ; I live to wreak
Heaven's wrath upon the Roman !

Boad. Would my girls
Had perished ! Death were fairer than their shame.

Madoc. The more thy need, thy power to grasp revenge !

Boad. Man, wilt thou gird at me, by heaven's red bolt
Smitten so sore ?

Enter VORTIGERN.

Vor. I bring you happy news,
The lost is found ; Guenebra lives . . .

Boad. Ha, lives !
Sayest thou my Guenebra lives ? But how ?

Vor. Seeking, I met her, from the Roman camp
Newly escaped, with terror in her looks ;
No word she answered me, but on her lips
The cry of " Mother " hung. 'Twere best alone
You two should meet ; so bid the people go. [*Exit.*

Madoc. Warriors, Guenebra's found, and she who bore
Would clasp her to a mother's breast . . . retire . . .
Their grief is sacred . . . Wait upon the hour !
[*Exeunt Britons, murmuring.*

Enter GUENEBRA and VORTIGERN.

Guen. Mother, my mother !

Boad. Come to me, my child !
Wilt thou shrink back from me ? I am thy mother.

Guen. No more thy daughter ! Thou wilt hate me now,
That was thy first-born.

Boad. Is there help for thee ?

Guen. Mother, thou hast a dagger's point for him. . . .
For me, too . . . I have loved him . . . let me die !

Boad. If this be so, my daughter, why, oh, why
Art thou alive ?

Guen. Enough ! I trusted him
Who paid my faith with shame, my love with hate.
Cast me away to death !

Boad. Come to my heart ;
Here is a sorrow greater than thine own !
Thy sister . . . What of Ena ?

Guen. I know nothing.
Julius Agrippa from the Roman camp
Dismissed me, in my frenzy of despair.
They march towards London ; if she be not dead,
Ena is still among them.

Boad. We will follow.
Madoc, come hither. Call the people back ;
I do remember me, I am their Queen !
My Ena, would I knew that thou wert dead,
Thou whom I loved the most !

Car. Nay, there is hope
For Ena, lady ; she, amongst our foes
Hath a defender.

Boad. What said Vortigern ?
Was't not through him my children were undone ?

Enter Britons ; they range themselves round the QUEEN.

Madoc. Speak, Princess, and command thy people's lives.

Boad. Hear me, my people ; look upon your Queen.

Ye men of Britain, from our common foe,
The abhorred Roman, I have borne such wrong
As . . . no, I cannot speak of that . . . my heart
Would burst in silence rather . . . one yet lives,
Born of my blood, within the Roman's power,
Ena, my youngest. We will rescue her.
I lead you to the battle, I, your chief,
Yea, as a man ! Unsexed by such foul wrong
As murders pity in this breast of mine
That beats for vengeance only ! May this hand
Wither, if I recoil from blood, or spare
The foe that cries for mercy ! Though my feet
Trample their dead, and wade in Roman gore
Till o'er my forehead rise its purple sea,
'Twill not wipe out the burning blush of shame.
As ye are men, avenge me !

[*Shouts.*

Vor.

Ay, we will.

Boad. Thou ? . . . No, not thou ! Thou shalt not come
with us,

Thrice perjured traitor ! 'Tis such deeds as thine

Have cleft the heart of valour's oak in twain,
Undone our country. Oh, were we at one,
Banded to hold our Britain 'gainst the world,
No Roman prows should vex our sea-girt isle,
No foul invading foot should ever stand
On the white cliffs of Albion ! Nor one slave
Taint with his breath our native air. 'Twas we
Hurled back great Cæsar, baffled, from our shores,
Who held the world in chains, while we were free !
From traitors in our midst, defend us, gods !
With open foes ourselves know how to deal !
Thou, Madoc, art a judge to purge this land
From foul revolt. . . . Make answer, Vortigern !

Madoc. Speechless with guilt, already self-condemned,
Thy doom is death. [To VORTIGERN.

Car. Unspeak that sentence, Queen ;
Make room for mercy here, and sate revenge
Upon a million lives !

Boad. So be't. Enough
Of slaughter is to come. This wretch shall live,
For fear a brother's blood offend the gods,
And turn aside their wrath awaked on Rome.
Pass judgment, priest, but not upon his life.

[*Music of harps.*

Madoc. Hear and tremble, Vortigern,
On thy head thy guilt return !
Boadicea's royal name,
By thy treachery brought to shame,
Set infection in thy breath ;
Living, call in vain on death !
On thy quenched hearth, Vortigern,
Sacred fire no more shall burn.
To thy prayer just Heaven denies
Hope, with right of sacrifice.
Rot and perish ! All foul things
Live of thy dead flesh, their stings
Suck a venom of thy spirit ;
Thou, no other life inherit !
From thy people thou'rt cut off,
Be the Roman's scorn and scoff !
Hence, accursèd ! Heaven and Earth
Loathe the sun that saw thy birth !

TABLEAU.—*Scene closes in.*

SCENE 2.—*Atrium in JULIUS AGRIPPA'S villa on the banks of the Thames, London. Curtains down at back.*

Enter ADONIS and PARIS.

Adon. Yes, to-night, our noble patron, Julius Agrippa, feasts his friends. Light heels in the ascendant, my nimble Paris, a tight-rope dance overhead! There's a chance for thee, my sword of Damocles! Brace up the patron's nerves.

Par. What makes him out of humour with idleness? The fog in London, or is he in love?

Adon. Thou hast hit it. This last nourisher of spleen, provoked by a local Venus, a barbarian Helen, a pretty subject for a quarrel!

Par. With the Britons? That's very kind of us now! A pack of bull-dogs that fight for the very love of it! If we gave them no amusement that way, they'd fall out and kill one another to the last man.

Adon. We can spare their men, but, by all the Graces! we'll keep some of their women alive. You look to your antics, man, and make our barbarian princess Ena merry. That's the way to come in the patron's good graces.

Par. I make myself a show to amuse a barbarian! I'm above that. Does the patron take me for a wild beast?

However, if 'tis the last patrician whim, I must sweat to cure his sick fancy.

Adon. That 's well. So ! the feast is served up. Vanish, slave ! *[Looking off.*

Par. Slave ! Do you mean—— ?

Adon. I mean, out of the way ! and stay there till you're wanted.

Par. I'm as good as you, Adonis. You've been a slave before to-day, and the stuff of it 's in you yet.

Adon. Begone ! or 'twill be the worse for thee. *[Exit PARIS.]* Flouted by that scum of the earth ! That's my respect, in Julius Agrippa's service. And a hard yoke his fickle favour is . . . to be loved and hated within one hour ; Guenebra proved that fortune. Now, her sister Ena, his friend's betrothed, is the sport of his fancy. Well, my liberty is worth something. That gives me dominion over this stubborn race of Britain, to vex them. Yes, that is my part ; to subdue them may set my betters hard. But I'll none of their women. Heigh ho ! for supper ! That 's the pleasure to live for ; ho, supper, ho ! *[Exit.*

Curtains open at back on SCENE 3 ; the Triclinium. A banquet. JULIUS AGRIPPA and guests discovered, reclining at table. Attendants. ADONIS waiting.

Agri. A Roman villa on the banks of Thames !
Like you my taste, friends ? Think we are at home
By yellow Tiber ! See yon snowy swan
Glassing her image in the glittering stream,
Like beauty in the mirror of our eyes,
And live for pleasure ! Seize the happy hour
'Neath this pale sun of Britain. Here 's the fire
Shall set your veins aglow, the red Falernian !
Ho, for our games ! We feast our eyes to-night
With feats of manly skill ; keep lovely woman
For second course ; we've some fair dancing girls.

PARIS enters, and performs on a rope above the heads of the banqueters. A noise without.

Agri. Who 's there without ? Adonis, go and see.
Invite them in. [*Exit ADONIS.*] Some madcaps at their
pranks ;
The more the merrier.

Enter LUCIUS CORNELIUS *and* VORTIGERN.

Agri. What, thou, Cornelius?
I thought thou wert in camp . . . but welcome here,
This is your place, by me.

Corn. No, Tribune, no !
My business brooks no dallying. Answer me,
What have you done with Ena? Her I seek.

Agri. Indeed, sir? Look around ; where she may be
You know as much as we.

Corn. Is this a lie?
Thou'rt ready at invention, Vortigern,
Speak what thou knowest.

Vor. From the Roman camp
Her sister fled, alone.

Agri. His word 'gainst mine !
Is this to be endured ? Send back the slave
Whipped for desertion.

Vor. Noble Roman, save me
From my own countrymen ! Release the maid !

Agri. What, is she in my keeping? Best then join
Our feast, Cornelius, come!

Corn. This is no time ;

All Britain is in arms ; the fiery sign
From rugged Caledonia to the edge
Of undiscovered ocean in the West,
Has gathered every man ; their rallying cry,
Revenge and rescue of the Royal maid !
This ground beneath our feet already shakes
With thunder of their chariots, and the tramp
Of horsemen, and the air we breathe is thick
With clang of arms and shouts of men ; their hosts
Swoop down on London.

Agri. How can they approach
But they must first o'erwhelm the Roman Province,
Crush the Ninth Legion?

Corn. That is done, and more !
One of a few, I live to tell the tale.

Agri. Comes Suetonius to the rescue?

Corn. Ay;
But he abandons London ; his command
Rallies his forces round him ; not enough
Our strength to hold this city 'gainst the foe,
Whom we must conquer in the open field.
Our duty calls at once to quit the town.

Agri. To-morrow . . .

Corn. Tribune, it must be to-day

Agri. Then take my charge ; lead forth our men at once ;
I will make ready quick and follow you.

Corn. But, Tribune . . .

Agri. I have spoken ; thou art bound
Under authority.

Corn. [*Aside.*] Against my will.
How hard the Roman soldier's murderous work
Strives 'gainst the spirit of a Christian man.

[*Exeunt CORNELIUS and VORTIGERN.*]

Agri. Go then, with happy fortune ! Occupation
Keep thee at distance till to-morrow ! Friends,
We play to-day.

Adon. But danger is around.

Agri. What 's that to me ? Should I forego my purpose ?
No, man ; our name protects us ; fenced with stone,
Our watch-towers set upon the river's banks,
We dwell above invasion's panic fears ;
Retreat we when we may ! Be merry, friends,
You love to look on beauty ? You shall see
My captive in these wilds. Bring Ena hither.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

Cornelius thought to break my wild bird's cage. . . .

How did he know? Adonis, answer that,
I'll keeper of my secret.

Adon. Pardon me ;
My honourable patron has not told
A single lie upon his own behalf
In all this business. Your lips are clean ;
I soil mine for you ; 'tis my humble service.

Enter ENA and Attendants.

Agri. Here comes my pearl of Britain. Welcome, sweet !
Look up, and let me see you, fair and bright.
Nay, smile ; we love not tears.

Ena. [*Aside.*] Alone, past help,
Past rescue ! Oh, Cornelius, oh, my love,
Hast thou forsaken me ?

Agri. Canst thou not speak ?
A marble maiden ! Here is wine for thee,
Drink, know the taste of joy, the thrill of love,
Commend me to the kisses of thy lips !

Ena. Where is my sister ? Thou false-hearted Roman,
What hast thou done with her ?

Agri. What 's that to thee ?
I love thee.

Ena. Traitor, I have heard thee swear
A thousand oaths, Guenebra was thy love ;
I'll hear no more.

Agri. Beware ! I am thy lord,
And thou the captive of my sword ; obey !

Ena. The daughter of a king . . . no slave of thine !

Agri. Oh, ho ! my Princess ! You shall be much envied
Of Roman ladies, as Agrippa's love.

Ena. Respect in me a Roman's wife ; I am
Cornelius' betrothed.

Agri. 'Twixt cup and lip
We'll snatch from him the bridal kiss . . .

Ena. [*Rushing to the altar of the Penates.*] Away !
Upon the altar of thy household gods,
If aught there be yet holy in thine eyes,
I am safe. . . . Oh, spare me, as I am a maid,
Defenceless, in thy power !

Agri. My goddess thou !
Forbid with words, and with attractive tears
Use exquisite compulsion ! Thou art mine.

Ena. No, I am free ! Thou tak'st me not alive !
Another step, and on your marble floor
I dash me down to death.

Agri.

Close in around !

Prevent her . . . Ha !

[Guests *rise* ; attendants *approach the altar*.

Ena.

A moment, and 'tis done !

[ENA *flings herself down on the pavement*.

Agri. [*Bending over her.*] Stone-still ; what, hast thou left
me, baffled, mocked

With the possession of those marble charms ?

Why wouldst thou die ? [A light is seen from the river.

Look, look, a gleam of fire

Upon the river . . . See, the heavens aglow

With blaze of burning. Did you hear that sound ?

Noise and confusion of the bloody strife !

[A cry within, " Fly, fly ! "

Fly for your lives, the Britons are upon us ;

Bear her away with us.

Adon.

Impossible !

On with our comrades, join the Roman ranks

Retreating from the town ; 'tis life or death !

[*Exeunt in confusion ; enter Britons shouting ;
they commence pillaging, and some bring torches
to set fire to the building.*

Enter BOADICEA, attended.

Boad. Hold, for your lives ! The town is in our hands ;
Burn not, nor slay ; give place to no revenge ;
Seek first my daughters. [*Sees ENA lying on the ground.*

Oh, my child, my child !

Ena, look up . . . thou'rt pale . . . and cold . . . No, no !
Not dead ! not dead ! What have they done with thee ?
Tell it to me, thy mother ! Silent, still . . .
Ah, they have killed thee ! Ye are merciless,
Ye gods who shape our doom ! . . . My men, go forth,
Warriors of Britain, kill, kill, burn, and slay
All ye find living ; show no mercy, none
To child or mother, for they spared not mine !
Crush ye the adder in the egg, the babes
Of Roman fathers suckling at the breast ;
And she who bears such fruit beneath her heart,
Let her not live ; the pangs of death, not birth,
Bring forth the issue of this hideous hour !
Kill, burn, destroy, I will have blood, blood, blood !

[*Exeunt Britons with shouts.*

Boad. [*Beside ENA.*] Ye gods, I thank you I have suffered ;
these

My foes shall suffer now. The scourge, the flame,
Torments less keen than mine ! I will requite
Beforehand what my country may endure
From Romans yet. Woe to the vanquished, woe
To Britain's enemies ! The firm-built towers
On this free soil by haughty Julius set,
As badges of our servitude, shall fall,
Stone upon stone, till furrowed fields remain
Where London was ! And London be no more :
That name for ever perish ! . . . Ha, she stirs !

[*ENA revives.*

My cry has roused the heart that beats on mine.

Ena. Release me ; I would rather die than live,
Cornelius false to me . . . ah, lost, betrayed !
Romans, where am I ?

Boad. On thy mother's breast ;
My maiden, speak to me.

Ena. Oh, mother, mother !
Here let me weep my sorrow out . . . my heart
Is broken . . . thou dost love me yet ?

Boad. [*Embracing her.*] Mine own !
Oh, ye immortals who look down on this,
Cast back upon my foes the wrongs I bear,

And I will glut upon my bosom-pangs
Sweetened by hate. No mercy, spare not, strike,
Give me my great revenge and let me die !

[TABLEAU. *Flames rise ; Britons come on, shouting.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Roman camp near Verulamium. The tent of*
 PAULINUS SUETONIUS. *An altar of turf, etc.*

JULIUS AGRIPPA, ADONIS.

Agri. So Paulinus Suetonius has returned from his expedition to the West . . . too late to save London, but soon enough to cross my purposes.

Adon. Will the General be curious in putting questions as to the manner of our marching out of the town?

Agri. That he will; here, in his own tent, our chief holds the inquiry to-day. I shall be called to a strict account. Why did I not march out with my legions? Why linger behind, like a fool, to be chased before a woman's army? Oh, shame, shame!

Adon. Before a woman, truly, a man should not retreat, or—run away . . . unless, indeed, he run away with, not from. That's the particle of difference.

Agri. Truly, Cornelius will accuse me to the General. How shall I meet his evidence against me?

Adon. How? by a counter-charge, to be sure. Denounce him as a Christian, a contemner of the gods of Rome . . .

Agri. The gods of Rome! Heaven save the mark! Each mortal man of us is to himself a divinity.

Adon. A most free and enlightened hero-worship! But do you accuse Cornelius of defection from that national and established creed, and his damnation, and your acquittal, will be made safe.

Agri. Hush, man! Here comes Suetonius, with my enemy . . . and the arch-traitor, Vortigern.

Enter PAULINUS SUETONIUS, attended; LUCIUS CORNELIUS, VORTIGERN, etc. SUETONIUS takes his seat under the tent.

Suet. How hardly may the yoke of Rome be set
On this rebellious brood of Britain's isle!
But, comrades, how is this? While I break down
With steel and fire their superstition's hold
In Western Mona, you, surrounded here
By colonized lands, and veterans, whose homes
Have made a Roman Britain, . . . foot by foot,
Have wellnigh yielded all? Barbarian hordes,
Sprung native of the soil, have risen up,

Like land-devouring seas to push us out
As aliens and usurpers. All my power
Mocked by their woman-chief in your defeat !
I've heard, on seventy thousand Roman lives
Fell slaughter, in the sack of London town.

Corn. That is too true.

Suet. Then who shall bear the blame ?

Corn. Why, we ourselves ; this stubborn island race
Bend to no master's will ; led they may be,
Not driven to submission. More than life
They treasure freedom's jewel, most of all,
The honour of their women ; wronged in that,
Britain outmatches Rome.

Suet. Who stands accused
Amongst us of such wrong ?

Corn. Julius Agrippa.
He bore by force the daughters of the Queen
Into the Roman camp. In London town,
Ena was with him ; for this cause, Agrippa
Hung back from duty. Ask yon trembling slave
Who planned the vile assault !

Suet. Stand forth, Adonis ;
Answer the truth, for thee we can compel

By torture, to supply Agrippa's silence,
Inviolate, as a citizen of Rome.

Adon. Noble Paulinus, thus enforced by fear,
I will confess, 'twas I who did conduct
The Lady Ena to my master's house.

Corn. Thou wretch, why didst thou so, thou a freed man?

Adon. He has set free my body, not my spirit ;
I did his hest.

Agri. Well, sirs, and if he did ?
Say that fair Ena followed me for love,
Should I not hide it, for the damsel's sake ?

Corn. Villain, 'tis false ! the maiden's love is mine ;
She is wooed and won in honour as my wife,
Clear of suspicion as of taint. Being such,
Who dares asperse her fame ?

Agri. And if not hers,
Thine lies within my censure.

Corn. Vortigern,
Bear witness, though unwilling, as a foe ;
Thou knowest best, on my part all was faith,
On his, dishonour.

Vor. To my shame I speak,
Most noble General ; for all these wrongs

I am to blame, who thought no ill to be
A messenger of honourable love
To Lady Ena from this warrior.
That night both maids were borne away, I knew
Guenebra by Agrippa was beloved,
Wronged, scorned, and hated after ; I was made
My people's curse, by ban of fire, for this,
A Roman's crime. Remorse, not fear of death,
Compels the truth from me. I have spoken all.

Agri. If that be so, Cornelius, thee I charge
Thou hast contrived this trick to slander me.
Thou art my enemy ; but thee I know
A false contemner of thy country's gods,
A traitor to the majesty of Rome ;
Cæsar's authority thou laugh'st to scorn ;
Thou art a Christian.

Corn. 'Tis most true, I am :
No traitor. Though the Emperor of Rome
Cannot compel the worship of my soul
Due to the King of Kings, as earthly lord
I yield him duty with my blood, my life ;
These, as by oath of service I am bound,
I render unto Cæsar.

Suet. I will have
No half allegiance. We should be at one,
Here, in this Roman camp, a little troop
Hedged in by myriads. Here on British ground,
Do Cæsar's name and fortune stand with us ;
Yonder the altar raised by martial hands
To Hercules, and Cæsar the Divine :
In token of obedience, offer there
Thy incense to thy country's gods . . . if not,
Thou art no Roman soldier !

Corn. All commands
Will I obey, save this ; a Roman dies
In his obedience. Could I serve with these
True soldiers of the eagles, once proved false
To the high majesty of heaven, whose word
Stands above Cæsar's ?

Suet. Sacrifice, or die ! [*Murmurs.*
Who stirs ? No mutiny, or I decree
Every tenth man to share Cornelius' death.

[*Cries*, " Sacrifice, comrade, sacrifice ! "

Corn. My countrymen, I will not sacrifice !
Look to thyself, Paulinus, what art thou,
To speak our lives away with breath of thine ?

Beware ! Thy cruelty, in Rome itself,
Links to thy name the echo of a curse,
Spoken with abhorring even in Nero's ear.
Not on the bosom of this land, the nurse
Of dauntless men, may thine oppression thrive
To tread down conscience, the immortal spark
Of heaven's free light, which owns no Lord but Him
Who made His image in the living soul !
See thou assail not that, nor shed more blood,
A Roman's, at thy will.

Suet. Enough of words !

To me thou ow'st obedience ; yield, or die !

Vor. Hear me, dread lord ! within the British camp
Are many Roman captives, bound in chains,
Ready for sacrifice ; then send Cornelius
On thy behalf, to treat for their release,
Putting his life in jeopardy for theirs,
Rather than shed, thyself, a Roman's blood.

Suet. By Bacchus ! the barbarian reasons well !
Cornelius, we promote thee to this mission
On our affairs in Hades. Vortigern,
Go thou as guide to our ambassador.

Vor. Noble Paulinus, spare me! 'Twere the same

You cast me bound among devouring wolves,
As thus to meet my countrymen.

Suet. Obey,

My gentle savage, 'twill be best for thee.

Agri. In Rome we're not so tender of men's lives,
But we might find thee some uncouth, rare beast
To cope with i' th' arena ; put in force
Your new philosophy, to die for truth.

Corn. I bear a Roman's life upon this hazard
To ransom many lives ; thou answer me
One honest word, Agrippa, ere I go :
Tell me of Ena.

Agri. I was never held
A guardian of young maids.

Corn. Unworthy Roman !
Thou art the cause of all How long, just heaven,
Wilt thou look on, and stay me from revenge ?
Come, Vortigern. [*Exeunt CORNELIUS and VORTIGERN.*]

Agri. This is a woman's war,
To vex the air with words, my General,
I'll answer him with deeds, and prove myself
Worthy, in battle, of the charge I hold.

Suet. So be it, Tribune ; we'll prepare for fight,

Our supreme cast with Fate. Great Julius came
To gather honour on this barren isle,
His conquest of the sea, an ornament
To hang on Fortune's neck. We, having kept
No footing past the trenches round our camp,
Sell life to win back honour, life and all !

[*Shouts. Scene closes in.*]

SCENE 2.—*A Retreat in a Forest.* MADOC, CARIOVALDA.

Madoc. Bid to this solemnity every Druid and every Bard
they have left alive. To-night we purge the land with
sacrifice to the god of thunder. Make ready the altars with
the sacred fire, kindled from the sun. 'Tis blood must feed
them, blood ! Five hundred Roman prisoners shall embrace
their doom.

Car. Must all die, all ? Have you no thought for what
revenge they will exact of us should fortune again fall over
to the Roman ?

Madoc. No thought but this, to make broad the breach of
heart-hatred that divides us, wide as life from death. Away,
prepare with haste ! Here in the forest recess I await the

Queen. Afterwards I'll join you at the great Stone Circle.
Go !

Car. 'Tis sore against the grain. [*Exit.*

Madoc. [*Looking off.*] Lo there, unconquered Britain's
Majesty !

She seems no woman, but a burning flame,
A spirit o'erwrought with passion ; at this strait
She must not blench ; I'll prove her to the soul.

Enter BOADICEA.

Boad. Blood, and still blood ! For ever flows the stream
Around me where I stand. . . . Oh, horrible !
Will ye not let me rest, ye branding shames
That lash me to revenge ? Here at my heart
The fire will not burn out ; no hideous sights
Sate its hot wrath with havoc, sack and flame,
Though we have left proud London but a heap
Of dust and ashes. . . . Ha, the mother's cry
Cleaves through me . . . they have torn her from her
babe. . . .

Warriors of Britain, will ye slay the child ?
'Tis more than I can bear. . . . Stay, mercy, stay !
I am a mother and most miserable.

Mador. Oh, Boadicea, I have seen thee, Queen,
Shine, meteor-like, a flash of flaming hair
Above the sea of battle ; winged with fear,
The thunder of thy chariot-wheels led on
Fierce Victory's race, and 'neath thy horses' hoofs
Mingled thy foes with dust ! Thou who bear'st sway
O'er man, art thou but woman ?

Boad. Once, once more
To taste the rapture of revenge, and die !

Madoc. Not yet ; one struggle still, to extirpate
This Roman gangrene from our land's pure life ;
Think nothing done while that remains to do.
But steel thy bosom firm as Fate. To-night,
We'll pale the stars with fires of sacrifice,
And feast the gods with cries of men, devote
To burning death. Thy place is there, to show
A brow undaunted as the augury
Of victory to-morrow ! Thou, our Queen,
Who bear'st a heart so great to live or die,
One with thy people.

Boad. That I will, I will !
This crown I wear, my daughters' heritage,
Bows to no mortal foe.

Madoc. Thy daughters, Queen,
False and unnatural ! By our holy laws,
Death were their dower, for kisses with our foes
Exchanged by maids of Britain. Ena bears
A heart attaint with Rome's impiety,
The superstition of an alien race.
Break that to mild obedience ; bid her heed
She worship these alone, her father's gods,
War, slaughter, and revenge !

Boad. Go, fetch my child !

[*Exit MADOC.*]

Can this be true ? My darling, Ena, turned
Against me, in my sore extremity ?
No, I will not believe it, cruel priest !

Enter ENA.

My own one, is it thou ?

Ena. My dearest mother,
Why grieve alone ? Come, let me comfort thee.

Boad. What know'st thou, girl, of comfort ? I have done
With peace for ever. Nothing left but this :
To conquer and to die !

Ena. Why wilt thou speak

So bitterly to me? Could my great love . . .

Boad. What is love worth, apart from duty, honour?
Hatest thou whom I hate? Wilt curse with me
The name of every Roman?

Ena. No, I cannot!
Those eyes forbid, which bound me, heart and soul,
Once and for ever!

Boad. Most unhappy child!
Speak'st thou of thy betrayer, of Cornelius,
Who gave thee to his friend?

Ena. That may be so; . . .
And yet, the foul thought wrongs him; of his lips
I have been taught to conquer hate with love;
Bitter the rind though sweet the fruit that bears
The heavenly balm, forgiveness!

Boad. Answer not
Thy mother so, my girl. Oh, mock me not,
Soul-sick with thirst of vengeance for thy wrong.
By the sharp pang that brought thee to this world,
Cast out that man, that Roman, from thine heart!

Ena. Must I believe the worst of him, unheard?

Boad. Thou lov'st him well?

Ena. Oh, mother, ask me not:

Sweet love has turned to poison ; all life's joy
Sinks in despair . . . and yet I feel I love !

Boad. Worse than thy sister ; she has suffered wrong,
But thou, seduced in heart, hast given consent
To thy own soul's pollution. Ye just gods,
Who tend on mortal love with nature's gifts
Of immortality, why was I made
A mother, blest with woman's crown of joy ?
I envy her who never bore a child !
For never was I humbled till this day,
And to the earth ye have struck down my pride
In this, my daughter !

Ena. Mother, hear me, mother ! . . .

Boad. Speak not to me, most miserable girl :
Thy words are sharper than the Roman lash
That cut my flesh with lighter pangs than thou,
Searing my soul with wroth-love and hot shame !
Provoke me not to anger, lest I call
Upon thy head the curse of Nero's name,
The mother-slaughterer !

Ena. Oh, curse me not !

My mother, my own mother, do not curse
The wretched life thou gav'st me. . . . Take it back

And end my misery and thy wrath together :

But kiss me ere thou kill'st me !

Boad.

Off, away !

Thou 'rt none of mine : my bosom casts thee out,

Thou handmaid of the Roman. . . . Oh, my shame !

[*Exit BOADICEA.*

Ena. Cold earth, be kinder than a mother's breast

Made hard by pride ; be pitiful to me . . .

I have no mother, none . . . Oh, take me, Death !

Enter GUENEBA.

Guen. What dost thou, weeping there upon the ground,
Calling on Death ?

Ena.

Oh, sister, is it thou ?

Guen. Call me not sister ; thou hast turned away
Agrippa's heart from me, his plighted wife,
Who am cast off to shame . . .

Ena.

Was that my fault,

When I did love Cornelius ?

Guen.

Come then, now,

And see Cornelius perish. He is ta'en,
And all the Roman captives are to die
At the great sacrifice !

Ena. Cornelius die !

Guen. Ay, would Agrippa too might share his doom,
Since thou hast taught him falsehood !

Ena. Say not that !

Are we not sisters ? I, like thee, most wretched ;
Come to the sacrifice ; he may be saved,
And I may die for him. Come ! Come with me ! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE 3.—*A Druidical Circle in a forest of oaks. Fires
lighted for sacrifice. MADOC, CARIOVALDA, BOADICEA,
GUENEBRA, ENA ; Druids, Bards, Priestesses, Warriors,
Women, Roman Captives.*

*MADOC and Druids advance in procession to the great
Altar. Harps.*

Madoc. Oh, Queen and people, warriors of Britain,
Hear by my voice the will of the high heavens,
Big with your coming fate ! We sacrifice,
This night, to him who casts the thunderbolt,
And the strong god of war. We give of earth's
Most precious things, the blood of brave men's lives,
Poured out upon the ground and burned with fire ;
An offering of life for life to hell,

That so this land and nation may be saved.

Boad. So, willingly at need shall mine be poured.
Lives there a Briton, born of this dear land,
But bears as stout a heart to die for her?

Madoc. Romans, stand forth!

[*The Roman prisoners advance.*

These captives, ta'en in war,
Red-handed, are already doomed to die.
Bind them upon the cromlechs. Where is he
Who bears us greeting from the lords of Rome?
Lucius Cornelius.

Enter LUCIUS CORNELIUS *and* VORTIGERN.

Corn. [*Advancing.*] Here!

Madoc. Art come among us,
Brought by the conduct of yon caitiff wretch,
Aweary of thy life, and lacking heart
To end it with a blow? Thou meetest here
Me, as thy enemy, and offended Fate,
The sternest foe to man! Yet, hadst thou brought
Thy red right hand hot with our children's blood,
By custom of this British land 'tis just,
Ere we condemn, to hear. What canst thou urge

To stay the doom of death ?

Corn. For these men's lives,
Which you would pour like water on the ground,
I come as the ambassador of Rome
To treat with you. My life is in your hands,
Though sacred, as a herald's, freely given
A ransom for my comrades.

Madoc. We will hold
No terms with Rome, to set a price on shame,
But purge the land with fire, till ye repay
Blood for dishonour.

Corn. That can be atoned
By gentler counsels. Join in marriage bonds
With citizens of Rome ; that title brings
Fit honour to the daughters of a king ;
Let Ena be my wife . . .

Ena. [*Apart.*] He loves me true !

Corn. Consent to this, I'll hold Agrippa bound
By contract to Guenebra.

Boad. Wed with ye
Our daughters ! Join our hands in unity !
Deemed I my blood could ever mix with thine,
I'd drain its life out from that trembling form

Which clings about my feet ! Die, daughter, die,
Upon the altar of our country's gods,
Rather than live, the abhorred invader's mate !

Corn. These are the gods ye worship, wrath and
hate !

To these would ye devote my blood, to these
Who turn sweet nature in a mother's breast
To gall of cruelty ! False, false as hell,
Such gods shall perish ! Now another Light
Hath risen to rule the world in truth and love.

Madoc. Die, die upon the altar, thou blasphemer !
We will not hear of Rome's idolatries,
Whose temples close around their gods of stone ;
Here, in the noon of night, beneath the gloom
Of the primeval oaks, our mysteries keep
The worship of our fathers, paid to Him
Who built the everlasting vault, and spake,
Kindling the lights of heaven ! To Him we yield
The sacrifice of blood.

Corn. Know better Whom
Ye seek in ignorance, than to mar His gift,
The spark divine of life !

Madoc. No more, thou diest !

Ena. [*Falling at MADOC's feet.*] Oh, hear me, thou dread
minister of wrath,

My last, last hope can only cling to thee !
If thou hast loved, have pity on my love ;
Spare but one life that's all the world to me !
Give me Cornelius !

Madoc. Damsel, thou dost mind me
I had a daughter, tender as thyself,
A virgin priestess ; when I saw her die,
Slain by the Roman, then my heart grew stone
Hard as yon cromlechs. Speak no more. He dies.

Ena. No, take my life for his ; if blood must flow,
Mine, pure and royal, shall appease your gods.

Madoc. Thine pure and royal ! Faithless and profane,
Our unpolluted altars spurn thee back !
Heaven's curses for thy country's ruin fall
On thee and on thy shame !

Ena. No ; as I am
A Christian maid !

Boad. What, thou a Christian too ?

Ena. I am, and dare to die with him I love !

[*ENA clings to CORNELIUS.*]

Boad. Unnatural ! Separate, lest horror blast

The vision of mine eyes. Is this my child
Clasped in a Roman's arms? Tear them apart!

Madoc. Wretch! Wouldst thou drag her to her death
with thee?

Part, at the high gods' bidding. Fear the breath
That rends the thunder-cloud, the Arch-druid's curse,
Fraught with the fury of the eternal Powers
Who shall dissolve thee in their elements,
Scatter thy dust upon the winds of heaven,
Lost and annihilate. Begone and die!

Ena. Slay us together, for we will not part;
I have no fear to perish in yon flame,
Made strong to suffer all with him, through love
Immortal as our souls. Stern priest, thy power
Bars not heaven's bliss from those whose trust is there.

Corn. The dove defies the eagle; such our hope
As arms the weak to conquer death with joy;
The tender virgin to o'ercome proud man;
Such shall the mothers be of Britain's sons,
A proud Imperial race to rule the world!

Car. Oh, royal Queen and Mother, shut not out
The voice of blessing from thine ear and heart;
Thou too, so fair, hast known the charm of love,

Fed on earth's bliss, that dream of shadows, blent
 With light divine such as heart knows not of . . .
 For man's poor, fleeting life is like the bird
 That droops her wing beneath thy open door,
 Wooed by thy fire with momentary warmth,
 Through rain and tempest beating cold without,
 Ere she pass on from winter into winter,
 From dark of birth to death.

Boad.

Old man, 'tis life

Harrows the soul, not death. [*To ENA.*] Thou, who hast
 bowed

My head to earth with shame, who art my child . . .

I will not slay the life of thy young heart ;

Live, Ena ; . . . He shall live . . . I am thy mother !

Ena. Forgive me, sweet my mother, . . . or if not,
 Hide me, thou earth, in my dead father's grave.

Boad. That look ! . . . his look ! Oh, turn away thine
 eyes,

They are thy father's !

[*Embracing ENA.*

Corn.

What shall countervail

Mercy and truth ? By these shall Britain stand

Undaunted, in the glorious days to be !

The God of battles, heaven and earth's dread King,

Shall fight upon her side !

Madoc.

Give me a sword,

For I will fight with weapons as a man,

No longer vex with words, a robèd priest,

While ye are up and doing, and the gods

Whose voice I am, make mock of my gray head,

And curse that killeth not my country's foes.

But these my hands shall slay them ! Ho, a sword !

Boad. [*To CORNELIUS.*] Warrior of Rome, we meet again

. . . to-morrow.

We will not slay, save in the battle strife.

Go back to those who sent thee ; bid them know

What hearts we bear in Britain. Go, but hear . . .

Bring forth a warrior's arms and shield for me,

I too will fight till death ! My chariot, ho !

Bards, sound your harps ! And thou, our prophet-chief,

Madoc, lift up the song of Victory !

[*Shouts and clashing of arms. Bards play on their,
harps.*]

Madoc. [*Speaks to music.*] Queen and people of this land

Turn again and take your stand ;

Sure as shines to-morrow's sun

On the battle lost and won,

Sure as they who dare to die
From dark Fate pluck Victory,
Men of Britain's dauntless strain,
Never fought nor bled in vain !
Earth commingling with their blood
Teems with an heroic brood,
Born to bring the tyrant low,
Bred to trample down the foe.
Fallen is Rome ! The heavens' smile
Lights the world from Britain's Isle ;
Bears o'er farthest ocean wave
Hope and freedom for the slave . . .
Thou Unknown and awful Power,
Swiftly speed the avenging hour !
Hand that shapes the days to come,
Haste to break the yoke of Rome !
Burst through night, triumphant day,
Till the world shall pass away !

[*During MADOC'S incantation BOADICEA'S war-chariot comes on. She ascends it, arming herself with sword, spear and shield.*

Boad. Romans, ye war against women ; not we
Render to captives our wrongs . . . all are free !

This is our answer to Rome ; Right is Might !
Here for rude Nature's rough justice we fight.
Here to the strong we hurl back blow for blow ;
Britons, a woman leads on 'gainst the foe !
God above all unto Thee do we seek,
Send forth thy power through the arm of the weak !
Warriors, shout the battle-cry !
Forward ! Death or Victory ! [*Shouts, clash of arms.*]

TABLEAU. END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The British encampment near Verulamium.*MADOC, BOADICEA, *looking out.*

Boad. Look where they stand, in yonder narrow pass,
 Hard by their fenced town of Verulam;
 All that are left of them on Britain's earth,
 Which burns the invader's foot . . . How few they seem!

Madoc. Ten thousand, at the most.

Boad. And these are all
 The nation fierce of brow and strange of tongue
 Brings against us? Go, count the stars of heaven,
 And weigh the sands upon our sea-swept shores,
 To tell our countless hosts! And these are all
 Yet left to conquer!

Madoc. All . . . and yet not all.
 The spirit of the ages strives this day,
 Or with us, or against us.

Boad. Know'st thou not,

When Britain rose in arms to avenge my wrong,
How there were heard strange, hideous sounds by night,
While in the Roman temple, face to earth,
Their idol, Victory, fell? And down the Thames
Floated a vision on the waters' face,
Fire, carnage and the utter rout of Rome?
What mean these portents, if the gods retract,
Our cause half won?

Madoc. I cannot answer thee ;
The gods are mute, and all things pass away.

Boad. Here we stand firm ! Yon chariots bar retreat,
Borne down with tender freight of women, babes,
Age-stricken parents, all the hearts of men
Most cleave to . . . Here we conquer or we die !

Madoc. Here, too, I cast my mortal lot, a man,
With all my countrymen. Too old to change,
Though the gods fail me, I will keep my oath !
Me, when a boy, my warrior father swore
To everlasting hate of butchering Rome ;
He fell in battle, and my mother's vow
Devoted me a priest to the high gods ;
Vain service ! For their marble heaven looked on,
While, like the forest patriarch despoiled,

Stroke upon stroke, all my fair branches fell,
Lopped from the old oak's heart : now all are reft,
The withered trunk must feel the bitter axe
Gnaw at its root. But in my fall I'll crush
The hands that maimed me !

Boad. Even so, I feel
I am going to my death ; for that I long
With passion, as a bride ! To do some deed
Shall give this body of my earthly pain
Back to the elements, and wing my dust
To every corner of this British land,
While my free soul among the immortals lives,
And Boadicea's name, in honour shrined,
Dwells in my country's heart.

Madoc. That name shall shine
O'er Britain like a star !

Boad. I will not live
To grace the triumph of that fiend-like man,
Paulinus Suetonius. Never hand
Of Roman dame shall point me out with scorn
To mocking churls ; and boast, " Yon fair-haired slave
Was once a Queen in Britain !" No, lest might
Of brutal strength o'erbear me, and I fail

Of death in battle, give me poison, thou,
Such as thou keepest for the utmost need . . .
Give it me !

Madoc. [*Giving a phial.*] Here ; in this is liberty ;
In thy own hand abides thy life or death ;
No man hath power on thee or thine.

Boad. My children . . .
What, kill them too ?

Madoc. The gods require not that
Of thee, their mother. By thy death alone
This land shall live. [*MADOC goes up through the camp.*]

ENA enters.

Ena. My mother, where art thou ?
Thou goest to the battle. Take me with thee.

Boad. Then come with me ; perchance to see the man,
The Roman whom thou lovest, with his sword
Thrust my heart through.

Ena. No ; first this breast of mine
Shall yield the dearest drop of life for thee !

Boad. Thou shalt not come . . . Entreat me not, my
child !

Ena. I am not worthy even to die for thee ?

Boad. Nay, I would have thee live, if I must die,
That the great name of Britain's royal blood
Perish not from the land, but live and reign
Enthronèd in the Islands of the sea ;
Life of my life, live thou !

Ena. Oh me, my mother !
The clans are gathering at the battle call !

Enter MADOC and GUENEVRA.

Guen. Mother, look, yonder looms the eagle's swoop !
Madoc. Turn, Royal Lioness, and rend thy foes !
Stand forth among thy people as a Queen,
With these, thy daughters ! Speak, and we will hear
And follow thee to death or victory !

*Enter a number of British warriors. BOADICEA ascends
a hillock.*

Boad. Ye men of Britain, 'tis your use and wont
To strive in battle led by woman's hand ;
But now avenge me, not indeed as sprung
From royal lineage, for my kingdom reft
And wealth despoiled, but as a most poor woman,
Avenge my body's outraged dignity,

Torn with the lash ; my daughters' innocence
To foul pollution shamefully betrayed.
The Roman's greed, insatiable, abhorred,
Reveres nor age nor tender virginhood ;
But yet, the gods are with our just revenge !
One Legion dared to meet with us in arms,
And perished ! In their camps the rest are hid,
Or scattered round for flight. They cannot bide
The shouts and clangour of your thousands met ;
How then the charge and struggle, man to man ?
Think of your countless hosts, your cause for war,
To vanquish or to die ! Such my resolve,
A woman's ; men who will may live as slaves.

[*Shouts ; clash of arms. BOADICEA and her
daughters mount a chariot, and exeunt omnes.
Noises of a battle.*

Enter VORTIGERN.

Vor. I know not whither I go, nor how I live ;
There, every man of Britain stands, save me,
Who count not as a man ; for I have lost
All man should live for, all but a shamed life
Too vile to cast away in Britain's cause.

Lo, yonder Boadicea stands, a Queen
On her war-chariot. . . . See, she speaks, she moves,
Her daughters by her side, from rank to rank
Throughout the British host, with eye, hand, tongue,
Kindling the fire of each heroic heart.

[*Shouts and noises of battle.*

Enter ENA.

Ena. Parted for ever from my mother's side !
The battles rages. . . . Hist ! the tramp, the rush !
The wail of women ! Nearer sound the cries . . .
Who's there ?

Vor. A wretch, unfit to live or die.

Ena. Vortigern !

Vor. Ay.

Ena. See, see, the thin bright line
Of steel and purple, like a sword's sharp edge
Spotted with blood ; 'tis thus the Romans fight.
Merciful heaven ! They cleave us through and through !
Mother ! Cornelius ! . . . Ah, I see no more !

[*Hides her eyes.*

Vor. Fly, lady, fly ! The Romans are upon us !

Enter AGRIPPA *and* Roman Soldiers.

Agri. Halt there ! For plunder of the British camp ;
Each man secure his treasure. . . . Here is mine !

[He goes to seize ENA. She escapes from him to

VORTIGERN.

Ena. [*To* VORTIGERN.] Defend, or kill me, as thou art a
man !

Vor. Lady, I will, as true as I have life
From Britain's earth !

Agri. Stand back, barbarian slave !

Vor. Look on thy death, thou Roman ravisher !

[Exeunt fighting.

Ena. Where is Cornelius ? Pitying heaven, forgive !
Look on me, save me !

Enter AGRIPPA.

Agri. I have killed the slave !
Fair Ena, come with me.

Enter CORNELIUS.

Corn. Not while I live !

Ena. Cornelius ! Ah, saved, saved !

[Rushes to CORNELIUS.

Agri. Yield up that maid,
The captive of my sword !

Corn. My wife betrothed . . .
I hold her safe from thee. Thou, keep thy own ;
Is not Guenebra fair ?

Agri. My mind is changed ;
I love not, but in gentle Ena's eye
There's something it would please me to subdue.

Corn. Touch not my right !

Agri. Thou Galilean hound !
Yield up the girl !

Corn. Then take her with my life !
Heaven is above the power of Rome, and thine !

[*They fight ; AGRIPPA falls.*

So falls the conqueror in his hour of pride,
Who shows no mercy to a vanquished foe !
Here is thy refuge, Ena, on my breast ;
Here may'st thou weep for mother, native land,
All that thou lovest hitherto . . . all lost ;
Yet all shall be repaid with love and faith :
As on a rock, let thy heart anchor here !

Ena. Fond hope will cling to life and strive with grief,
So sweet our love, so strong, so loth to die !

Look! the Arch-druid from the field of blood
Staggers with faintness of a deadly wound !

Enter MADOC.

Madoc. No, I come back unhurt, that sought for Death
And found it not ; my brain is like a sea
Swollen 'neath the moon's strong influence. I am drunk
With the fierce wine of war. My charioteer
And horses slain, I fell to earth, o'erturned,
And rose again to gaze upon the wreck
Of the lost army. . . . Why, O sun, is light
Left to the wretched ? Why, my life to me,
Bitter in soul ?

Corn. Take comfort at my hand ;
I offer thee protection.

Madoc. Who art thou
That mockest at calamity ? This land
Hath graves to give her sons, whose deeds shall stand
As landmarks by the everlasting sea,
As the great stones on Britain's shores upreared
Show to the mariner where dwells the race
Indomitable, of this ocean-Isle,
Crowned with a circlet by the boundless sea.

Mysterious monuments shall tell, this land
Bred giants in her youth, and wonder of it
Shall long perplex the puny heirs of Time !
Take back thy scorn ; of thee, my enemy,
I will have nothing.

Ena. [*To MADOC.*] Prophet of our fate,
Canst tell me of my mother ? What of her ?

Madoc. Look with thine eyes ! There, where her chariot
comes.

Ena. My mother lives ! . . . Oh me ! she faints . . . her
head

Falls backward . . . She sinks down upon the ground
Into my sister's arms. . . . Oh, mother ! mother !

[*ENA rushes out.*]

Corn. Oh, Boadicea ! What rash hand hath dared
Profane that ornament of victory,
Thy royal person, by the law of war
Most sacred to us all ?

Madoc. No hand of man
Hath touched that royal life, too proud to brook
Shame and captivity ; so dies a Queen,
Unconquered to the last. Ye clouds of heaven
Melt with your tears the blood-congealèd earth,

And veil with black the pale and awe-struck sun,
Before the majesty of such a death !

Corn. [*To Roman soldiers.*] Comrades, stand back ;
offend not with your eyes

A woman's agony . . . nobler in her fall
Than Roman Cæsar, sovereign of the world !

Enter BOADICEA, supported by GUENEBRA and ENA.

Ena. What ails thee, mother? Hath some arrow's point
Touched the sweet fountain of thy life so near?
Oh, yet look up and speak ! . . . Thou'rt wrung with pain !

Boad. So sharp, so bitter anguish, those who love
Would wish my pains quick end. . . .

Madoc. [*Advancing.*] How fares it, lady?

Boad. Oh, I have tasted of the deadly plant
Whose flower is blue of heaven, whose root is hell.
I could not conquer Fate, so this is best . . .
Say, have I kept my word, to do or die?

Ena. My mother die . . . Could none help this? Not
one
In all our Britain?

Boad. What men could they did.
My Britons bravely died ! Not conquered yet,

But slain they lie, their faces to the foe,
Defiant in grim death ! . . . I keep my oath
To yield to him, the lord of all that live,
Not stoop to mortal conqueror . . . Oh, me !

Madoc. Break forth and rain, thou passion of mine eyes,
That dropped no tear till now ! Did I look on,
And could not save, wife, sons and daughter slain,
Now, now to die of grief ? Cut off this hand,
That mixed the cruel poison ! When thou'rt gone,
No eye of man shall ever more behold
This aged, ruined form, for oh, thy pangs
Wring a last drop of human agony
Here, from my stone-cold heart ! Break, break at last !

Boad. Guenebra, look ! There lies the Roman dead,
Who did thee wrong. The gods are just !

Guen. Oh, mother !
Speak not of him ! The music of my life
Lies hushed in silence.

Boad. Fare thee well for ever,
Sweet air of Britain ! Earth and sky, farewell.
Breezes of ocean, free as light, that bear
Our Island's manhood o'er the farthest seas,
No more shall ye revive me with your breath !

Far depths of forests, where, a huntress Queen,
 Red deer and grisly wolf, and fiercer bear,
 Knew me and feared . . . my wind-swift steeds of war,
 And chariot winged with thunder . . . I have done
 With all beneath the sun . . . oh, motherland,
 For thee I taste cold death. [*Faints.*

Ena. Thou shalt not die ;
 Mother, come back to me !

Boad. [*Reviving.*] Who calls again ?
 I hear a voice I knew ere thou wast born
 Whisper me, Come ! . . . Oh, husband of my youth !
 Wilt woo me to thine arms, and thrill my veins
 With bridal tremors through the dark of death ?
 To join thee in some ecstasy of bliss
 Past mortal rapture . . . Take me to thy breast,
 And kiss me to my everlasting peace ;
 For one soft sigh breathed low upon thy heart
 Were more than all the weary load of greatness,
 To weigh against the burden of my grief !
 My spirit feels thy spirit through the flesh
 Dissolved in dews of death.

Ena. Thy blessing yet !
 Forgive the love that strove with thy great love,

Here, in my breaking heart Forgive me, mother !

Boad. A Roman by thy side !

Ena.

He prays for thee

To heaven's high King, whom here thou hast not known . . .

Thou shalt, hereafter !

[*Soft music.*]

Boad.

Oh, ye clear blue depths,

The veil is rent . . . I see the eternal Light

Shine forth in truth and freedom o'er this land !

The harps, the songs of triumph call my soul . . .

All's well . . . one struggle more . . . I sink, I faint . . .

[*Starting up.*] Hark ! hark ! the battle-cry ! Charge,

Britons, charge !

Just Heaven, defend the right ! Up, Victory !

[*Music of harps ; BOADICEA falls dead. GUENEBRA*

leans over her. ENA looks in her mother's face, while CORNELIUS leads her away.

Then, with a cry, she falls into his arms.

TABLEAU. CURTAIN.

POEMS AND SONNETS.

THE RESCUE OF KHARTOUM.

“REMEMBER GORDON,”—fourteen springs have heard the
deathless name

Thrill through our hearts with glow of pride, with flush of
burning shame,

Since whelmed from ambush in the hour of midnight’s deepest
gloom

The hero died for England’s love, alone in lost Khartoum.

In Egypt, they had not forgot—while through the earnest
years

His comrades turned to vengeful swords the trampled peasants’
shears ;

Slatin the slave, once forced to look on Gordon’s gory head,
Risen, as living, from the grave, the gathered armies led.

The desert yields their path, subdued by stress of strenuous
hands ;

With iron ways and fiery wings they bridge the parching
sands ;

Through deadly dust, through midnight chills, through arrows
of the sun,
They bear the brunt, nor swerve, nor halt, until the goal is
won.

At last ! our horsemen breast the height and scan the depth
below ;
A great dark sea with crest of white rolls on the advancing
foe ;
Tap, tap, as 'twere the woodman's axe—ha, nearer ! thud
and thrum—
Now, rapture to the eager ear—there booms the great war-
drum.

The silver river's band of light winds round our envied
prize ;
Gate of old Nilus, Omdurmán behind their banners lies ;
There rises bold their citadel, the murderous Mahdi's tomb,
And far away, we see, or dream, the palm-trees of Khartoum.

To-morrow sees the deadly strife ; in arms all night we lay ;
We watched the heaven's kindling light, the rose-red flush
from gray ;

Behind our heads the foot of morn has topped the distant
hill :

The silent wrath that holds our hosts bids pulse and heart
stand still.

Hark ! hark ! upon the river—there ! the gunboats' roar
began :

They hurled with whirring blasts of death the doom of
Omdurmán :

The battle-fire was in our veins : fixed motionless and
dumb,

We panted 'neath the breath of war, the unuttered word,
“they come !”

The straining ear is mocked, as 'twere with whisper of a
sound—

Faint echoes from the far away run low along the ground—

A voice of many waters breaks, and rises to a roar,

The thunder of the wind-swept waves against an iron shore.

They are coming on ! their banners flash like clouds of black
and white :

Across our line, their myriads deploy from left to right :

The pied-clad desert sons of steel are moving straight and
fast—

They are coming on! ha, nearer yet, we face our foe at
last!

Now 'tis the hour; the avenger waits; above the encounter
stands

Kitchener, and his ready staff to fly with his commands:

White steed and white-clad warrior to friend and foe from
far

Gleam radiant o'er the embattled field as victory's bright
star.

Out of the desert space they come, a vast, fierce tidal wave,
Three miles of men, set broad and square, the bravest of the
brave,

Armed with desire of mortal stroke—for him who faithful
dies

Shall black-eyed maidens kiss to life in bowers of Paradise.

They rise, a vision weird and strange, as wrought by magic
charms,

A vision of the ages old, the wild man's savage arms,

The grim Crusader's coat of mail, the helmet of the knight,
The Arab spear and sword of proof,—a maze that mocked
our sight.

Fire ! bugle sound and shouts of men let loose the lightning
flash ;

The air is thick with leaden hail, the bullets leap and crash ;
The iron throats of cannon speak their messages that kill :
Unbroken lines on lines rush on—then shuddering, sink
stone still.

They covered that dread harvest field, white robes besprent
with red,

The fluttering garb of warrior priests, the shrouds of heroes
dead ;

Proud martyrs to the darkest cause that ever stained earth's
breast,

Till silence, and the breath of morn whispered their spirits
rest.

“ Lancers advance, by Surgham Hill, on, on to Omdurmán ! ”
The Sirdar's messenger brings word, and ready, every man,
They mount, they scour the river plain—the Arabs bide
unseen

Lurking in ambush, ten to one, down in the deep ravine.

Three hundred showed beyond them, the wily foe's decoy :
The bugles sound, the Lancers charge, on, on, with shouts
 of joy !
Three thousand lie in wait—too late we see the fell surprise ;
Earth opens 'neath our feet—up starts cold steel with savage
 cries.

Down, down into the trap of death the onset rushed and
 fell—
Through slaughtering swords they shore a path out of that
 pit of hell,
Where those who stumbled rose no more, and struggling up
 the side
The wounded charger spent his strength to save his lord,
 and died.

" Rally, fall in ! " yelled mangled lips, half choked with flow-
 ing blood :
" Through them again ! "—The chief restrained ; the troop,
 dismounted, stood :
Back, back their carbines drive the prey 'neath battery and
 gun :
Three thousand fall away and melt like snow beneath the
 sun.

Once more the proud Khalifa leads his braves, unconquered
yet ;

His flag of menace darkly looms, in shuddering earth deep
set ;

His horsemen ride to win or die—red carnage checked the
race,

Where children of the land stood up and met them face to
face.

Are these the swarthy sheep, sometime the Mahdi's fence-
less prey,

By stout Macdonald led to grace "the Stricken Field" this
day ?

Whirled at his word in martial round where'er there lived a
foe,

Till 'neath the sable standard's folds the last of all lay low.

To Omdurmán ! we storm the walls compact of blood and
shame,

The stronghold of the merciless, of deeds without a name ;
Where Christian women's cries rise up from dens of greed
and lust,

Where men drag on a life in death, subdued to eat the dust.

We come ! the captive's life-long chains are shivered with a
stroke ;
The women lift their trampled necks and spurn dishonour's
yoke ;
O'er land and river freedom breathes once more her glorious
peace,
The joy of ancient days revived with honour and increase.

The savage sounds of strife were hushed, as by a magic
spell ;
The blest relief of Sabbath rest on war's wild spirit fell ;
We stood as brothers, dark and white, where Gordon faced
his doom,
To honour with observance due his burial in Khartoum.

Old friend, true comrade of the dead, the Sirdar lifts his
hand :
England and Egypt's banners flash above the enfranchised
land :
The shouts of men, the cannons' boom, the martial strains
of pride
Melt into mournful notes for him who lone, forsaken, died.

All through his wild-grown garden, beneath the drooping
palm,
Floated the breath of holy words, the solemn funeral psalm ;
Scottish and English Churchmen meet, and join in heart-
warm prayer,
The priest beloved, the man of God with crown of snowy
hair.

They plead for days of peace restored, to heal the wounds of
years,
While heroes bow their silent heads, nor shame to weep hot
tears :
Dark men and women mingle keen the wailing of Khartoum
With muffled drum and Coronach above our Gordon's tomb.

THE WRECK OF THE "ADEN."

June 9th, 1897.

TOLD BY A SURVIVOR.

SHALL I taste again of the warm sweet breath
Of the air on our English earth ?
A traveller taught in bonds of death
What the life God gave is worth.

Oh, joy of rescue ! What words could tell
Of the woes that fell on me,
As a prey snatched out of the jaws of hell
From the heart of the cruel sea !

Do you bid me speak of our freight of lives ?
A frail and tender band
From the far, far East, our babes and wives
Home-bound for the dear old land.

Upon the highway of the deep,
One direful day in June,
As a murderer roused from treacherous sleep
We met the dread Monsoon.

He smote the breast of the heaving main,
He seized with a demon's grip,
And lashed with rods of wind and rain
Our tempest-tortured ship.

She fought for her life and held her way,
While the dim reluctant sun
Withheld his hope-reviving ray
From dawn till night begun.

No pause, no rest for the sinews spent
In strife with the hungry seas ;
No hush to the moan of our dearest, pent
In nameless miseries.

'Twas in the cold, despairing hour
Before the gray day-break,
When phantoms upon the soul have power
Half slumbering, half awake—

A crash—that sleeping, ay, and dead,
Might hear through night's dark womb,
Aroused from rest each weary head,
As it were the trump of doom.

A crash !—a horrid grinding sound,
Like the groan of a parting life,
In anguish of a deadly wound
Beneath the assassin's knife.

As one sore smit with a human grief
The poor ship strove no more,
Fast fixed by the thrust of the hidden reef
That pierced her to the core.

"On deck ! on deck !" came the shout from above ;
And every soul, aware
Of the chasing death, a frightened drove,
Fought madly up the stair.

The women shrieked as our lights went out ;
From the dreadful dark below
They were huddled on deck, like the rabble rout
From battle, before the foe.

Thick night in her blackest pall of fear,
 Enclosed us like a wall ;
We saw no face, we could only hear
 Each wild imploring call.

Pale, from the portal of the East,
 The faint and struggling day
Swept through the swirl of seething yeast
 Across the water-way.

"Lower the boats !" came the word of hope—
 The three to port were gone—
Three left—upon the surges' slope
 We launched them, one by one.

Down, down, how many rushed and fell
 To make for the far-off shore—
Poor souls, we waved them a sad farewell,
 And we never saw them more.

With strained hands locked in death-like grip,
 We wretches left behind
Clung for dear life to the battered ship
 'Neath the lash of wave and wind.

The Wreck of the "Aden"

Up rose the eager seas athirst ;
 Green monsters, clammy cold,
Through shrinking flesh and marrow pierced
 And crushed in their snaky fold.

They wrench the mother's arms apart
 And ravish from her breast
The babe asleep upon her heart,
 To deeper, colder rest.

Husband and wife from their last embrace
 The ruthless waves forbid—
One left to live with the haunting face
 No kindly earth has hid.

Still with me dwells our Captain's look :
 I see his stout heart fail,
As with shivering fear his strong knees shook
 And his daring brow waxed pale.

All silent there, or answering wild,
 Before my eyes he stands ;
He babbles like a lisping child,
 And for ever wrings his hands.

Three times did a vision, a ship's pale ghost,
Come up from the dim sky-line ;
And our voices rose with the cry of the lost—
But they passed and made no sign.

We watched the silent, vanishing ships
Unmoved by our despair ;
Had God forgotten the parching lips
Now past the power of prayer ?

Deep and stern came the muttered oath
Of men who had hoped in vain ;
For the heart within us was hot and wroth
With bitter loss and pain.

Yet an angel came down with healing tears
On the day we honoured our Queen ;
Not for sovereign sway through the golden years
Of her glory that hath been.

Not for pride of empire o'er seas and lands
Beyond our living ken,
O'er subject nations built up by hands
Of dauntless Englishmen :

The Wreck of the "Aden"

Oh, woman's heart ! not thus, not thus
 Were our souls drawn out to thine,
Our mother, in sorrows one with us
 Poor waifs of the restless brine !

Our own, by the touch of our human joys,
 By the broken spirit's sigh,
Those about to perish lift up their voice
 And bless thee ere they die.

When the jubilant song and prayer were heard
 Through all thy boundless realm,
The thrill of their passion and worship stirred
 The prey that the waves must overwhelm.

Then a dawn of hope o'er our darkness broke—
 From the far horizon dip
Rose the small white cloud of a trailing smoke
 O'er the path of a rescuing ship—

She comes—my God, a boat, a boat !—
 Arms reach us, strong and brave ;
Through the whirl of water and wind we float
 From out our deep sea grave—

So the wreck of the "Aden" passed from sight

With the stress we would fain forget ;

And in England, many a happy night,

Safe from the sea, in dear home's delight,

We may tell the story yet.

MARTIN SPRAGUE.

A FIREMAN'S STORY.

HAVE you heard the fame of our comrade, sirs

Young Martin Ernest Sprague?

Do you mind the tale of that gallant life,

With more than a memory vague?

As the sparks fly upward, the noble deed

Was carried far and fast

On many a lip, and the name stands there,

On our roll of honour, last.

A crash like thunder was heard that night

'Midst the rush and roar of the Strand ;

The terror-blanced faces were scattered and fled

Through clouds of smoke and sand.

Was it crime or earthquake? burst followed burst,

And a mighty ruin fell

Of havocked houses and human forms

In smoking heaps, pell mell.

A cry of women ! A panic flight
Of children, wild with fear ;
A mournful train of the wounded borne
To ready succour near.

Behind them flashed red tongues of flame
Athirst for living prey :—
Fast bound and buried beneath the wreck
The fated victims lay.

Captain and men, we came at call
To battle with the foe,
And wrest from the crush of the ruined mass
The wretches pent below.

Our work was done—and a warning word
Bade fly the deadly fall
Of tottering rafters above our heads,
And tumbling roof and wall.

Too late ! too sudden-swift the shock—
Another earthquake's sound,
And both struck down, by my Captain's side
I lay on the heaving ground.

He rose with battered helm, and turned,
Like a mariner tempest-tossed,
As the smoke and dust-clouds lifted slow,
To count how many lost.

He told our numbers, man by man ;
And, as he called the roll,
Swift answer followed upon each name
From every living soul.

Ay, save one only—Martin Sprague—
A pause—and the silence ran
Through the blood in our veins, till it froze with fear
For the buried living man.

Who cared for himself? We flung in our lives,
If haply we might free
Our comrade, swallowed up beneath
A mountain of débris.

They brought the lightning-kindled lamp
From the pleasure house of song,
And beneath its search as keen as day
We toiled the slow night long.

At last ! a faint and distant moan
 Replied from the hollow deep,
And we force our way through the narrow rifts
 Where a snake might hardly creep.

Joy, joy ! once more we looked on his face—
 Where his body, wedged in pain,
Lay moveless through two awful hours
 While we wrought with might and main.

Ay, two hours yet in the grips of Death—
 And released in the early morn,
We lifted him tenderly back to life
 Like a helpless babe new-born.

Deft nurses moved about his bed,
 As in dreamy peace he lay,
Past cure, past hope for this fading world,
 That long, long parting day.

With the sweetest, strongest bonds of earth
 The heroic spirit was bound ;
With honour's garland about his brow
 Of youth by valour wound ;

With nature's treasures, love's closest, best
Delights to our bosom given ;
The wife, the mother, the babe he left,
When he passed to God at even.

THE PASSING OF GLADSTONE.

"And the greatest of these is love."

WHAT mighty son of honour, England's chief,
By conquering Time laid low,
Bears to his rest a stricken nation's grief
And praise of friend and foe?

The voices of the birds, the tender breath,
The heart-beat of sweet spring,
Hushed him to peace, with glory crowned by death
Above an earthly king.

Not by the matchless brain, the word of power
To charm the human will,
Shall light and Freedom's hope, the Future's dower
Grow with his spirit still :

Nay, by the better treasure from above,
The heart within his breast,
Drawn to earth's utmost bourne, wherever love
Might sorrow with the oppressed,

By this, the garland of renown he bears
Among us shall endure,
A memory embalmed in widows' prayers
And blessings of God's poor.

And thou, his wife of youth and age, left lone
Beneath thy setting sun,
Deem not this parting—he shall live, thy own
For ever, two made one.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

"The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing."—ISAIAH, xiv. 7.

HAIL, Christmas, hail! Creation's blest surcease
 From pain and woe, bright birth-night of the King,
 When tongues of men and angels, tuned to peace,
 Break forth and sing.

Our spirit gathers to Thy holy rest,
 As pants on weary wing the homing dove
 O'er pathless wild and water, towards her nest
 Upborne by longing love.

On her, frail carrier of some word of Fate,
 One hope, the message of the lost, is hung;
 Dear bird of God, sent forth to seek her mate
 And find her tender young.

Famished, forespent, she falters on the way,
Sinks, fluttering down upon the friendly shore ;
There hands of love her hunger-pangs allay,
And she spreads wing once more.

Lo, as the wandering bird, content to bide
Her hour of weakness, lights on quivering wing,
Our human heart, this happy Christmastide
Gives pause to sorrowing.

Again, again shall passion's broken bond
Knit soul to soul with balm of healing kiss,
When Nature's yearning, in the Light beyond
Divinely fades to bliss.

Joy, Christmas, joy ! Bright birthday of the King ;
From pain and woe, Creation's glad release ;
The Christ is born, and earth and heaven sing,
Hail to the Prince of Peace !

“SPERANZA”—LADY WILDE.

TRUE friend of many days ! In joy and woe
 Partaker of my heart's deep secret—gone
 Whither I, too, would follow ! Nevermore
 Our souls may mingle, nor thy word of fire
 Bid me good courage in faint Nature's path
 Borne on and upward to eternity.
 Proud Hecuba of sorrows, in thy arms
 Could woman's anguish weep its bitter fill,
 Touched by thy kiss with sweet compassion's balm.
 Oh, rich in mother-love unquenchable
 Our human spark of everlasting flame,
 Caught from the breath of God ! Ay, it is well
 He takes thee to His breast, to bind the wounds
 Of earth's rough battle, as thy hand has bound
 The broken-hearted, in thy mortal day.

SONNETS.

ARMENIA.

NATIONS and kings who bear the name of Christ,
Arise ! Your brothers of the land of Paul
Perish in fiendish torments, sacrificed
Like oxen slaughtered in the butcher's stall.
Have we no answer but submission tame
To still the cry that knocks on hearts of stone ?
Armenia's daughters crushed in blood and shame
Move ashen lips of death towards God's high throne,
The outraged wife beholds with closing eyes
Her husband hacked and severed joint from joint,
Lingering in anguish, while their infant dies
Spitted upon the murderous bayonet's point.
How long, how long will heaven look on and bear
Our callous patience, cold to their despair ?

THE QUEEN'S MESSAGE.

FEBRUARY 14TH, 1896.

O SOVEREIGN brow of England's Majesty
Engirt with sorrow's crown ! What timeless frost
Of war's dread feet with sudden chill has crossed
The sunshine of thy home ? So fade and die
Life's flowers and glories, like a passing sigh ;
And thou, our Queen, must yield the bitter cost,
The priceless harvest of thy dearest, lost,
To the vast garner of eternity.

Ay, thou canst feel the touch of heavenly balm
Through hearts that break, like thine, above the dust
Of earth to earth resigned, God's tender trust
For all that live, for thee and for thy child,
True to the last, by faith assured and calm,
Through quenchless hope of all things reconciled.

ISABEL, LADY BURTON.

"HUSBAND, I come!—I hear the call, I run
 To meet the tinkling of his camel bells,
 The dear dream-music, hope and memory's spells
 Enraving my happy spirit, won
 To brighter journeyings beyond the sun
 Where faith with love's imagination dwells,
 Where joy's new song in other language tells
 The blessing of us twain in God made one."

Fairest of women, time nor grief could dim
 Thine eyes' blue radiance, or the smile that passed
 Through nature's travail to the light beyond;
 The eternal heavens claim thee, by the bond
 Of like to like, in bliss re-knit with him
 Thy soul's desire from girlhood till the last

SONG.

FROM THE GERMAN.

THESE flowers that breathed their sweetness on thy breast
And fell forgotten in the dust to die,
Could they once more on thy red lip be pressed
Would thrill again with life's brief ecstasy ;
Couldst thou with love-warm tears the leaves bedew,
The fallen bud would bloom in summer joy,
And all the glory of its stem renew,
Crushed in his wanton sport by some rude boy.
Oh, might thy dear remembrance touch the dead,
On the cold forehead could thy tears rain hot,
Thy kiss fall sweetly on the silent head—
It should not lie forsaken and forgot,
Nor the swift soul, too eager, fleet away,
But rest awhile love's anguish to allay.

IN DAYS GONE BY.

"I go hence like the shadow that departeth, and am driven away as the grasshopper."—PSALM cix, 22.

THE deathless glory of a vanished sun,
 The pulse of life, the thrill of joy past joy,
 Time has no power upon me to destroy,
 My treasures, from the strife of passions won !
 Once and for evermore what's done is done,
 Though all things pass beyond me like a dream
 Of shadows cast upon a rushing stream
 Whose visions fade in darkness, one by one.

Yet, 'neath the eternal spirit's fiery kiss
 The transient image bodies forth again
 Love's dear dead face I knew in days gone by ;
 Could all the vast hereafter yield but this
 Sweet fruit of heart's desire to lips of pain,
 Our souls would flash together with a cry.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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